

Dump site cleanup on hold

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By **RUMAN MEMISHI**
Staff Reporter

ALSIP — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is unsure when a toxic dump in Alsip will be cleaned because a company that contracted to do the work was rejected after pleading guilty to fraud.

Pollution Control Industries of America (PCIA), of East Chicago, Ind., and its president, Kevin Prunsky, have pleaded guilty to two counts of defrauding the U.S. for failing to properly remove hazardous contaminants from another waste site, the EPA said Wednesday.

PCIA was hired by Chicago Industrial Waste Haulers to clean its dump at 4206 W. Shirley Lane after the EPA ordered the cleanup on April 19.

PCIA had previously entered into a contract with the government to remove 26 truck loads of benzene liquid sludge and three truck loads of contaminated rinse water from Wisconsin Steel in Chicago to a firm in Texas, said Richard Rupert, on-scene coordinator for the EPA. PCIA delivered only six of the sludge loads and none of the contaminated water loads to Texas, Rupert said.

"The remaining loads of liquid sludge are believed to have been disposed of in Chicago, while the contaminated rinse water was disposed of in Indianapolis," according to a letter sent Wednesday by the EPA

to Chicago Industrial. PCIA billed the government for the removal of all the loads and received full payment, Rupert said.

In the letter, the EPA informs Chicago Industrial that it cannot use PCIA and has two days to hire a new contractor to bring the Alsip site into conformity with environmental regulations.

If the new contractor is found "to be suspect for whatever reason," then the EPA will start cleaning the dump, Rupert said. By law, the EPA must give a dump owner a chance to clean its site before the EPA can do it, EPA officials said.

Although a final work plan for cleaning and test sampling on the site was submitted to the EPA by Friday's deadline, the new contractor can submit his own plan, Rupert said.

Rupert said he could not estimate how long it would take to clean the Alsip dump, adding that it "depends on how soon we can get the materials to an incinerator for disposal."

He said only about four hazardous waste incinerators nationwide are licensed to handle polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which are present at the dump, and each incinerator has a long waiting list.

The dump, which is closed and under guard, contains four or five large tanks that hold a highly flammable mixture of oils and solvents — including benzene, a known cancer-causing agent, and PCBs, which have been linked to reproductive disorders, according to the EPA.

Rupert stressed that the site does not present an imminent danger to nearby residents.

"There's no threat from being in the area except if there was a fire," he said, adding that the Alsip Fire Department has been notified to evacuate the area if a fire were to occur there.

U.S. EPA officials have made information on the dump site and its activities available to the public at the Village Hall, 4500 W. 123rd St.

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



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